

SUMMARY OF MID-GEORGIA/SOUTH GEORGIA PUBLIC MEETING

GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – October 23, 2007 Macon State College – Macon, Georgia

The second Savannah public meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at Macon State College in Macon, Ga on October 23, 2007 beginning at 5PM. The meeting was an open house format, with display boards exhibited around the room and a PowerPoint Presentation highlighting the study overview and findings in greater detail. Seven members of the public were in attendance. Matthew Fowler, GDOT Planning, thanked the attendees for coming and turned the floor over to Andrew Smith, Consultant Project Manager for HNTB. A summary of the meeting presentation follows.

Project Video/Introduction

Mr. Smith began by sharing the project video, including a 3-D animation of a truck lane, to help paint the picture of the expected freight increases in Georgia over the next 30 years. After the video, Mr. Smith began a presentation outlining the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the truck lanes study.

Segment Level Analysis

Mr. Smith reviewed the study's Phase I Recommendations and explained the evaluation criteria applied to each of the segments selected for further study. These include Safety and Security, Congestion and Mobility, Benefits and Costs, Economic Development Initiatives, Environmental, and Constructability. He shared findings related to Safety and Security as well as PM peak volumes and speeds in the truck lanes in 2035. Mr. Smith explained that the increases (equating to travel time savings) in some corridors are significant, though truck lanes are not a silver bullet for congestion in all areas. He continued with benefit-cost ratios, constructability ratings, and the environmental assessment. Each of these factors was considered in the identification of corridors for further analysis as a part of four truck only lane systems developed for the Atlanta region. He explained that despite scoring lower than some of the other selected segments, I-675 was included in a portion of the system analysis because it has a lot of available right of way and therefore offers some cost savings relevant for consideration in the analysis.

System Analysis

Mr. Smith presented the four system alternatives and described the logical termini and access points identified for each. He then presented the system analysis results, including corridor volumes, speeds, and benefit-cost ratios. The truck lanes attract demand from other arterials in the corridor and that the lanes accomplish a lot by doing this and keeping up speeds. He continued that there are two ways of looking at the B/C ratios. You can look at the system with highest benefit-cost ratio where you are getting the most for your money, or the system that costs most but also brings the most benefit. System 1 has the highest B/C ratio, but System 3 has the highest system benefit even though its costs are also the highest. Mr. Smith continued with the summary of environmental findings and final system rankings. He then provided a general summary of observations regarding truck lanes and the preliminary study recommendations, which include the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-85 North, I-75 South, I-20 West, and I-285 in Metro Atlanta. The first phase includes the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-285 West, and I-75 South.

Savannah Sub-Area

Mr. Smith provided an overview of the Savannah Sub-Area analysis conducted as part of the truck lanes effort. She explained that explosive growth projections at the Port of Savannah, as well as growth in warehouse/distribution space and increased commuter traffic have all contributed to the need for improvements that address truck-related traffic in the area. Ms. Bilotto outlined the importance of coordinating with other ongoing efforts in the area and provided an overview of the proposed port connector road project that is undergoing further consideration by GDOT and the Georgia Ports Authority. Additionally, operational improvements that address truck specific movements in the area will be included in the final recommendations of the study.

Conclusions/Next Steps

Mr. Smith then concluded the presentation with a summary of emerging issues related to truck lane opportunities. He explained that truck only lanes make sense, but they also must compete with many other improvements for limited funding.

Mr. Smith then opened the floor for questions.

Questions and Comments

Q: Access points introduce operational problems. Should truck lanes only have beginning and ending termini and serve truck trips going through Atlanta?

A: An origin and destination study has been conducted and it was found that only about 33% of trucks trips are going through Atlanta. Since truck lane is a big investment, we want to maximize the utility of the facility. Building truck lanes for only trips through Atlanta does not access and serve the whole market. The access points of truck lanes have been strategically chosen based on the technical analysis. They are limited and minimized - only two or three access points in each truck lane corridor.

Q: What impact will the fifth runway at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport have on the truck lanes?

A: There are still plenty room for widening underneath and on the other side.

Q: Would the cost of building lanes for cars only be cheaper than building the trucks lanes since the different pavement requirements?

A: The primary costs for building lanes with same configuration for both cars and trucks are right-of-way cost and the reconstruction cost of bridges and overpasses. Potentially there would be some cost savings for pavement, but it will be only a small fraction of the overall constructions costs.

Q: Has GDOT given up on the outer-perimeter idea?

A: It is not included in Atlanta Regional Commission's adopted transportation plan. In addition, the outer perimeter project introduces other issues such as right-of-way, socio-environment impacts, etc. The outer-loop evaluation is not included in the scope of the truck lane study.

Q: When will the Phase I be implemented if the truck lane project is moving forward?

A: That has not yet been decided. The purpose of this study is to open the dialogue and prepare the answers to the technical questions that the State Transportation Board might have related to truck lane investment. To have the truck only lane implemented, it needs to be included in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Q: What will be the restrictions for trucks? Some through trucks are still traveling through Downtown Atlanta. What will the enforcement process be?

A: The decision has not been made regarding restrictions. The enforcement is always difficult, but truck only lane facility will provide much tighter management since it is separated and with limited access points.

Q: Where can the emergency vehicles access the truck lanes?

A: Emergency vehicles can access truck lanes through movable barriers or through pylon barriers.